

**County of San Bernardino
Department of Behavioral Health**

Safety in the Field Procedure

Effective Date 7/13/94
Revision Date 9/18/06



Allan Rawland, Director

Purpose To establish safety procedures for staff when they are providing mental health services and case management in the field.

Caution

- Under no circumstances is staff to transport a client in their own vehicle
- Staff should review a client's chart and other available information to assess the client's history of mental illness, and potential for dangerous behavior prior to making a home/facility visit. If sufficient information is not available, or if the staff person is unsure as to his/her own safety, the Clinic Supervisor will determine if two staff persons should conduct the visit

Procedure Staff will follow the procedures below when conducting home/facility visits:

Roles	Responsibilities
Clinic	Set up a tracking system to use when staff make field visits. The tracking system should include: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Staff sign out time• approximate staff return time• A pager and/or cell phone number where staff can be contacted A "sign-in" board may be used for the above.
Clerical Staff	Clerical staff will notify the Clinic Supervisor or designee when a staff person conducting a facility field visit does not return within 30 minutes of the scheduled return time.

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Roles	Responsibilities
Clinical Staff	<p>Clinical staff making field visits should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Plan field client visits. Do not make unexpected visits to client and/or facility• Wear Department photo badges at all times while on field visits• Never assume that any field visit/intervention is routine. Be cautious and always err on the side of caution to ensure safety. When in doubt, contact supervisory staff for consultation. If supervisory staff is not available, terminate the visit and return to the clinic for consultation• When visiting an unknown area, drive through the area to assess potential for dangerousness. If staff determines that the area is not safe, return to the clinic and consult with the Clinic Supervisor• Upon arrival at the facility, identify yourself to the facility staff and state who you are visiting• Follow the emergency safety back-up rules that schools have in place when conducting field visits at school sites. In certain instances, clinics/programs may choose to co-develop safety procedures with school site administration. In this case, follow the mutually agreed upon procedures

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Precautions During Home Visits	<p>During a home visit, staff should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Never park in a dark parking lot. Always park vehicle in a manner that facilitates easy access and departure• Never enter a dark room• Always have access to a door. Never move too far away from a door entry• Be aware of dangerous objects such as scissors, flowerpots, utensils, etc., that could be used as weapons• Avoid unchecked/unleashed animals. When protection from unrestricted animals cannot be insured, staff should not proceed further onto the property• If available, take a cellular phone and/or pager• Report any threats or assaults made to a DBH staff person immediately to Law Enforcement by calling 911. Thereafter, immediately contact the supervisor, summarize the incident and complete the DBH Incident Report• If there is reason to believe there may be a problem with the home visit, request that two staff members make the visit
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